

**National Institutes of Health (NIH) NUTRITION COORDINATING COMMITTEE
(NCC) MEETING MINUTES
Natcher Conference Center, Conference Room J, Bethesda MD
July 16, 2002, 1:30-4:00 PM**

WELCOME

Dr. Van Hubbard, Director of the Division of Nutrition Research Coordination (DNRC), convened the NCC Meeting at 1:30 PM and welcomed the participants. Representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia attempted to participate via videoconference, but the connection failed shortly after the meeting began. The agenda for this meeting is provided as Appendix A, and the list of attendees is provided as Appendix B.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE MAY 2, 2002 NCC MEETING

Minutes from the May 2, 2002, NCC Meeting had previously been sent to NCC members via email. Dr. John Milner, National Cancer Institute (NCI), made a motion to approve the minutes, and Dr. Judy Finkelstein, National Institute on Aging (NIA), seconded the motion. The minutes were thus approved. Dr. Hubbard noted that the NCC minutes are now sent to participants only in electronic form, rather than hardcopy. The approved minutes are posted on the DNRC website, <http://www.dnrc.nih.gov>. Appendices to the minutes are also included if they are available in electronic form.

UPDATE OF DNRC ACTIVITIES

Dr. Hubbard introduced Dr. Nancy Miller-Ihli who is the Acting National Program Leader for Nutrition at the Agriculture Research Service (ARS) at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Dr. Miller-Ihli has replaced Dr. Kathy Ellwood, who recently left ARS, USDA to take a position at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Dr. Miller-Ihli will serve as the USDA liaison to the NCC through October 2002.

Dr. Hubbard noted that a taskforce with representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and USDA has been formed to work on the Healthy People Developmental Objective 19-15, which concerns improvement of the dietary quality of foods consumed in schools. This taskforce had its first meeting on July 2, 2002 and outlined some analyses of data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). The results of these analyses may serve as baseline data for the foods and nutrients obtained from foods consumed at school for children 6-19 years of age. NCC members who are interested in joining this taskforce and should contact Dr. Hubbard (van_hubbard@nih.gov).

HNRIM. Mr. Jim Krebs-Smith, DNRC, provided a status report of the Human Nutrition Research Information Management (HNRIM) System. He reported that the summer hiatus is providing the opportunity for updating HNRIM data for non-

NIH agencies and for compiling summaries of the NIH Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 data. He also mentioned that interviews for a program analyst position are proceeding, and he hopes to have the new staff on-board by the end of the summer.

Nutrition Education Subcommittee. Dr. Jean Pennington, DNRC, provided an update of the activities of the NIH Nutrition Education Subcommittee (NES). The NES has received 16 documents for review since the beginning of 2002. Four of the documents were part of the joint DHHS/USDA review process and included one document from FDA, two from the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP), and one from CDC. The other twelve documents were developed by NIH (four from the Weight-control Information Network (WIN), one from the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI), two from NIA, and five from the Clinical Center (CC) and Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS). Seven of the 12 NIH documents were subsequently revised and sent forward for joint DHHS/USDA review. The documents most recently reviewed by NES were four fact sheets prepared by CC and ODS on magnesium, selenium, folate, and vitamin B12.

Subcommittee on International Nutrition Research. Dr. Pamela Starke-Reed, DNRC, provided an update on the activities of the Subcommittee on International Nutrition Research (SCINR). The second meeting was held on June 12, 2002; the CoChairs will attempt to hold quarterly meetings on the first week of every fourth month. Dr. Barry Popkin from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill provided a guest presentation entitled *Multi-Country Study on Socio-Economic and Environmental Factors, Nutrition, and Non-Communicable Diseases in Countries in Transition*. Dr. Popkin also presented a proposal to study 14 countries to assess health outcomes related to environmental factors that impact dietary intake and food security. The Fogerty International Center (FIC) and SCINR will serve as conduits to identify appropriate points of contact at relevant Institutes and Centers (ICs) for this proposed study.

Mary Lou Valdez, Associate Director for Multilateral Affairs in the DHHS Office of Global Health Affairs (OGHA) provided a brief overview of OGHA and its activities.

SCINR members discussed the Food and Agriculture Organization/World Health Organization (FAO/WHO) Consultation Report *Diet, Nutrition and Prevention of Chronic Diseases* (available at <http://www.who.int/hrp/nutrition/ExpertConsultationGE.htm>). Concern was expressed about the weak scientific foundation upon which the recommendations were based. There was discussion about SCINR acting as the coordinating center for the development of a conference focusing on diet and chronic diseases, research gaps, and strategies to develop evidence-based interventions. The organization, support, and participation of the conference would include a consortium of stakeholders including other United States (US) government agencies, the private sector, non-government organizations, and academia. The next SCINR meeting will be held in September 2002.

Several NCC members asked questions about the FAO/WHO report, and Dr. Hubbard indicated that he would make the US response available with these minutes. The cover letter from Dr. William R. Steiger, Special Assistant to the Secretary for International Affairs, DHHS is provided as Appendix C, and the *US Comments on the Draft Report of the Joint WHO/FAO Expert Consultation on Diet, Nutrition, and the Prevention of Chronic Diseases* is available at http://www.globalhealth.gov/documents/whofaoreportusq6_final.pdf .

DIETARY MEASUREMENT ERROR AND ITS IMPLICATIONS: COMPARISON WITH FOOD FREQUENCY AND DOUBLY LABELED WATER ASSESSMENTS

Dr. Amy Subar, NCI, presented results from the *Observing Protein and Energy Nutrition (OPEN) Study*, which assessed dietary measurement error using two self-reported dietary instruments. Multiple-day food records or 24-hour recalls (24HRs) are currently used as reference instruments to calibrate food frequency questionnaires (FFQs) and to adjust findings from nutritional epidemiological studies for measurement error. The common adjustment is based on the critical requirements that the reference instrument is unbiased for true intake and that the errors in the reference instrument are independent of those in the FFQ and of the true intake. The OPEN Study was conducted from August 1999 to March 2000, to assess dietary measurement error using two self-reported dietary instruments: two FFQs and two 24HRs, and two dietary intake biomarkers: doubly labeled water for total energy expenditure (TEE), and two 24-hour urine collections for nitrogen intake. Participants were 484 men and women, 40-69 years of age, living in Montgomery County, Maryland. For men, underreporting of energy compared to TEE was approximately 13% on 24HRs and 34% on FFQs; underreporting of nitrogen compared to urinary nitrogen was about 11% for 24HRs and 32% for FFQs. For women, underreporting of energy on 24HRs and FFQs was approximately 18% and 36%, respectively; underreporting of nitrogen was 13% and 30%, respectively. For recalls, 9% of men and 7% of women underreported both energy and protein, while for the FFQ comparable values were 35% for men and 23% for women. In contrast, reported intakes of percent calories from protein were closer to biomarker estimates for both men and women. Using the biomarkers as the reference instruments, the data suggest that the FFQ leads to severe attenuation in estimated disease relative risks, and hence to loss of statistical power, for absolute protein or energy intakes. For protein, adjusted for energy intake, either by using nutrient density or nutrient residuals, the attenuation is less severe, lending weight to the use of these energy adjustments. Using the 24HR as a reference instrument can lead to an overly optimistic assessment of the attenuation in the FFQ, overestimating the attenuation factor by as much as 60%. With such overestimation, a study design using the 24HR as the reference instrument would need to be 2.5 larger than estimated to achieve the nominal power. This study suggests that FFQs suffer from substantial misreporting for some dietary factors.

Dr. Hubbard and the NCC members thanked Dr. Subar for her excellent presentation. Dr. Subar will provide her PowerPoint side presentation to Dr.

Hubbard and NCC members who would like a copy should send a note to Dr. Hubbard (van_hubbard@nih.gov).

Dr. Hubbard indicated that he would appreciate suggestions from NCC members for future scientific presentations at NCC meetings.

NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE, "WHAT IF IT'S ALL BEEN A BIG FAT LIE"

Dr. Hubbard led a discussion of a recent *New York (NY) Times* article by Mr. Gary Taubes that published on July 7, 2002 about weight reduction diets. The article, which was titled, *What if it's All Been a Big Fat Lie*, questioned whether the government dietary recommendations to lower dietary fat intake might, in fact, be responsible for the increase in obesity in the US and whether the Atkin's diet (i.e., a high fat, low carbohydrate diet) might be more effective in weight reduction. Meeting attendees received copies of the *NY Times* article, a *NY Times* rebuttal, *A Diet Rich in Partial Truths*, written by Dr. Dean Ornish, and the American Heart Association (AHA) position paper on *Dietary Protein and Weight Reduction* (St. Jeor et al, *Circulation* 104:1869-1874, 2001). Dr. Hubbard, Dr. Paul Coates, ODS, and Dr. Darla Danford, NHLBI have been invited to discuss the *NY Times* article with Congressional staffers for Congressmen, Mr. Dan Burton and Mr. Henry Waxman on July 18, 2002. The *NY Times* article appears to have misrepresented the messages provided in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and the *Food Guide Pyramid*. The article mistakenly assumes that the *Dietary Guidelines* and *Food Guide Pyramid* promote a low fat diet, that Americans have adopted a low fat diet, and that this low fat diet is coincident with the increase in overweight and obesity in the US. (The *Dietary Guidelines* did advocate a diet *low* in fat until the 2000 edition. For the 2000 edition, the advice was to *choose a diet...moderate in total fat*, meaning $\leq 30\%$ of calories from fat.) A general discussion ensued among NCC members about the errors in the article and about various studies that are underway to test specific dietary regimes for weight reduction. There was also discussion about the possibility that NIH or DHHS could provide a communication in the *NY Times* in response to the original article. Ms. Kathryn McMurry, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP), indicated that she would ascertain DHHS interest in developing this response.

UPDATE ON PROGRESS FOR THE 2005 DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS

Ms. McMurry, ODPHP, provided an update on plans for the 2005 edition of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. DHHS will take the lead responsibility and partner with USDA (CNPP and ARS) to orchestrate the revision. Currently, paperwork to draft the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DHHS and USDA and to draft the committee charter is underway. The next step will be to announce the request for committee member nomination (expected in the fall 2002). The likely candidates will be non-government scientists. They will begin their deliberations in the spring of 2003 and continue until the spring 2004. The goal is to have the new guidelines published by January 2005. Because 2004 is an election year, it is important to have the document published early in 2005 to

avoid delays that might be caused by a change in administration. Ms. McMurry also noted that ODPHP is looking for a DHHS nutritionist to be detailed to the Dietary Guidelines process.

REORGANIZATION OF THE CENTER FOR SCIENTIFIC REVIEW INTEGRATED REVIEW GROUPS AND STUDY SECTIONS

Dr. Coates, ODS, and Dr. Milner, NCI, initiated a discussion of the reorganization of the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) NIH Integrated Review Group (IRG) study sections that has been proposed CSR. The focus of the discussion was the potential effects of the reorganization on the review of nutrition research applications. The reorganized IRGs that are of primary interest to NCC members are the:

- Endocrinology, Metabolism, Nutrition, and Reproductive Sciences IRG, which will have seven new study sections (comment due by August 15, 2002) (http://www.drg.nih.gov/PSBR/EMNR/EMNR_Intro.htm);
- Digestive Sciences IRG, which will have 5 new study sections (comments due by July 29, 2002) (http://www.csr.nih.gov/PSBR/DIG/DIG_Intro.htm); and
- Oncology Sciences IRG, which has 13 new study sections (<http://www.csr.nih.gov/PSBR/ONC/ONC.pdf>).

Currently there are 1,596 RO1 nutrition projects funded by 20 NIH ICs. Most of these projects are funded by the National Institute for Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) (490 projects), NCI (341 projects), and NHLBI (216 projects). The Oncology Sciences IRG will consider applications involving basic, translational, and clinical investigations that encompass cancer prevention, initiation, promotion, progression, and treatment. The Chemo/Dietary Prevention Study Section (CDP) within this IRG will review grant applications that address dietary and chemo preventative factors and their use in intervention for modulation of cancer risk and inhibition of cancer. The development of the CDP study section is good in that it showcases nutrition and cancer research; however, it removes these projects from other nutrition research study sections.

ODS is involved in co-funding research on dietary supplements, and projects concerning dietary supplements often go either to the Endocrine, Metabolism, Nutrition, and Reproductive IRG or to the Digestive Sciences IRG. The individual study sections need to be composed of the appropriate, high quality reviewers for effective evaluation. It is imperative that the study section rosters reflect the mission statement of the IRG. There are several areas of specific concern with regard to the new IRGs: (1) there is not a good fit for nutritional immunology; (2) the nutrition IRG may serve as a catchall for applications that don't fit elsewhere; and (3) diverse committees are needed to address all studies.

Dr. Sooja Kim, CSR, noted that the IRG reorganization is designed to focus on organ systems, diseases, and health. The CSR Director appointed a Panel on Scientific Boundaries of Research, which recommended 24 IRGs and developed scientific boundaries and guidelines for each IRG. Based on these recommended guidelines, CSR conducted a mock sort of the May 2000 NIH Council applications. CSR organized Steering Committees, consisting of CSR staff and NIH Program staff, for each proposed IRG. The Steering Committees

developed a group of scientific areas within each IRG based on the mock sort of the May 2000 applications, and they developed a list of nominations for the Study Section Boundaries Team, which consists primarily of non-NIH scientists. For each IRG, the Study Section Boundaries Team proposed an IRG title, the number of study sections based on the first mock sort, names for the study sections, and a description of each study section. These recommendations were submitted for public comment, and Dr. Kim encouraged NCC members to provide comments by August 15, 2002. CSR and the Steering Committees for each IRG will review the public comments. Currently, CSR is completing a second mock sort of the October 2002 Council applications; the results will be shared with the Steering Committees. After consideration of the public comments and the results of the second mock sort, CSR will forward recommendations to the CSR Advisory Committee. The CSR Advisory Committee will forward their recommendations to the CSR Director after discussion at the January 2003 Committee meeting. The final decisions regarding the IRGs and Study Sections will be made by the CSR Director, and they will be implemented by 2004-2005. (Slides from this discussion prepared by Dr. Milner are available from Dr Hubbard (van_hubard@nih.gov)).

OFFICE OF DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS UPDATE

Dr. Coates, Director of ODS, provided an update of the activities of that office:

- A draft version of the *Evidence Report on Ephedra Efficacy and Safety* has been released for review by selected individuals and organizations. The RAND Southern California Evidence-Based Practice Center, under contract to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), is expected to complete the report and issue it in final form later in the fall. ODS and the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), who together sponsored this report, then expect to convene a panel of consultants to assist in determining the appropriate research steps to take.
- Representative Dan Burton of Indiana is holding a hearing of the House Government Reform Committee on July 25, 2002 on the topic of dietary supplement use in combination with healthy diet and lifestyle for health promotion. Dr. Coates will testify. A particular point for discussion is ephedra.
- Senator Durbin of Illinois is holding a hearing on July 31, 2002 on dietary supplements and weight loss. This hearing is subsequent to a report on this topic that he requested from the General Accounting Office. ODS and NHLBI are currently planning a workshop on this issue for late in 2002. Details will be available soon.
- ODS and ARS, USDA recently held a workshop on *Future Directions for the CSFII/NHANES Diet and Nutrition Survey*, concentrating on several issues that the planning committee judged to be important. These included the collection of food and dietary supplement intake data, the estimation of usual intakes, and databases on the composition of foods and supplements. A report of the meeting is to be published soon.
- A paper on *Meta-Analysis of Chromium Supplementation* was published in the most recent issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (AJCN 76:148-

155, 2002). It points to the promising, but largely unsupported, use of chromium supplements in the prevention of Type 2 diabetes and suggests future directions for research. Some research on chromium is already under investigation in NIDDK-funded projects.

- Directors and their staff from the five NIH Botanical Research Centers held a meeting in Bethesda on July 9-10, 2002 to review progress. The centers are managed by ODS, NCCAM, and the National Institute on Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). The centers are located at the University of California, Los Angeles; University of Illinois at Chicago; University of Arizona; Purdue University of Alabama at Birmingham, and University of Missouri/Missouri Botanical Garden. The program is in its third year. It is expected that the centers will re-compete in 2004, following an evaluation of the program by outside consultants and a review of the future needs of the ICs and Offices involved.

- The *Conference on the Science and Policy of Performance-Enhancing Products* was held early in 2002. A summary of the proceedings is in press and will be published in *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* in October 2002.

- The Conference on *Conjugated Linoleic Acid*, co-sponsored by ODS, DNRC, NCI, MCCAM, and NHLBI, was held in May 2002. The programs, abstracts, and slides for most of the presentations are on the ODS website (www.nih.od.ods.gov).

REPORTS FROM NCC MEMBERS AND LIAISONS

Dr. Milner provided copies of a document on *NCI Nutrition Research Training Opportunities in Diet and Cancer Prevention*. He suggested that other ICs develop similar documents and distribute them to potential candidates (e.g., at scientific meetings).

Dr. Milner announced the approval of a new Request for Application (RFA) entitled, *Diet, DNA Methylation and other Epigenetic Events and Cancer Prevention*. Approximately \$10.3 M have been set aside for this initiative. The application receipt date is March 14, 2003, and more information is available at <http://deainfo.nci.nih.gov/concepts/DNAMethylation.htm>. NUTRITIONCANCER listserv subscribers will be notified when the RFA is published. The Executive Summary for the *Diet, DNA Methylation Processes, and Health Workshop* are available at <http://www3.cancer.gov/prevention/methylation/index.html>.

Dr. Hubbard noted that Dr. Walter Mertz, who had worked at ARS, USDA for many years, had recently passed away. Dr. Mertz had made many significant contributions to nutritional sciences and had served as an *ex officio* member of the Advisory Council for NIDDK.

Ms. McMurry noted that ODPHP along with the Healthy People Co-Leads are planning a *Healthy People 2010 Summit* in Baltimore on April 15-16, 2003. This summit is in place of the usual consortium meeting, and the objective of the summit is to highlight community programs. She welcomes suggestions for

programs that could be presented at the summit and may be contacted at kmcmurry@osophs.dhhs.gov. It was noted that the dates for this summit conflict with the Experimental Biology Meetings in San Diego, California.

Dr. Danford, NHLBI, noted that NBC Dateline is expressing interest in the *NY Times* article on diet and obesity (discussed earlier), and may include this topic in an upcoming program.

Dr. Hubbard noted that there was a meeting of the NIH NHANES Interest Group on July 18, 2002 in Building 31, Conference Room 7, from 2-4 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

NEXT NCC MEETING

The next NCC Meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 5, 2002; however, it was pointed out that this conflicts with the September 5-6, 2002 meeting on *Nutritional Genomics and Proteomics in Cancer Prevention* supported by NCI, NCCAM, ODS and the Office of Rare Diseases (ORA). If there is to be a change in the date for the meeting, a note will be sent to attendees.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A - NIH NCC Meeting Agenda for July 16, 2002

Appendix B - NCC Meeting Attendees for July 16, 2002

Appendix C - Cover letter from Dr. William R. Steiger to the WHO Director-General regarding the US comments on the FAO/WHO Report

LIST OF ACRONYMS

24HRs:	24-hour dietary recalls
AHA:	American Heart Association
AHRQ:	Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
ARS:	Agriculture Research Service
CC:	Clinical Center
CDC:	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CNPP:	Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
CSR:	Center for Scientific Review
DHHS:	Department of Health and Human Services
DNRC:	Division of Nutrition Research Coordination
FAO:	Food and Agriculture Organization
FDA:	Food and Drug Administration
FFQs:	food frequency questionnaires
FIC:	Fogerty International Center
FY:	Fiscal Year
HNRIM:	Human Nutrition Research Information Management
ICs:	Institutes and Centers
IRG:	Integrated Review Group

MOU:	Memorandum of Understanding
NCC:	Nutrition Coordinating Committee
NCCAM:	National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine
NCI:	National Cancer Institute
NES:	Nutrition Education Subcommittee
NHANES:	National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey
NHLBI:	National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
NIA:	National Institute on Aging
NIEHS:	National Institute on Environmental Health Sciences
NIH:	National Institutes of Health
NY:	New York
ODPHP:	Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
ODS:	Office of Dietary Supplements
OGHA:	Office of Global Health Affairs
OPEN:	Observing Protein and Energy Nutrition
RFA:	Request for Application
SCINR:	Subcommittee on International Nutrition Research
TEE:	total energy expenditure
US:	United States
USDA:	United States Department of Agriculture
WHO:	World Health Organization
WIN:	Weight-control Information Network

APPENDIX A. NIH NCC MEETING AGENDA FOR JULY 16, 2002

1:30-4:00 PM, Natcher Conference Center, Conference Room J, Bethesda MD

- 1. Welcome**..... Van Hubbard
- 2. Approval of Minutes of the May 2, 2002 Meeting**.....Van Hubbard
- 3. DNRC Update of Activities**.....DNRC Staff
 - HNRIM Update.....Jim Krebs-Smith
 - Nutrition Education Subcommittee.....Jean Pennington
 - Subcommittee on International Nutrition Research.... .Pam Starke-Reed
- 4. Dietary Measurement Error and its Implications: Comparison of Food Frequency and Doubly Labeled Water Assessments**.....Amy Subar
- 5. New York Times Article, “What if it’s All Been a Big Fat Lie”**
Van Hubbard and NCC Members
- 6. Reorganization of NIH Integrated Review Group Study Sections**.....
Paul Coates and John Milner
- 7. Office of Dietary Supplements Update**.....Paul Coates
- 8. Reports from NCC Members and Liaisons**.....NCC Members
- 9. Next Meeting**.....Van Hubbard
- 10. Other Business**.....NCC Members

APPENDIX B. NCC MEETING ATTENDEES FOR JULY 16, 2002

	<u>Members Present</u>	<u>Members Absent</u>	<u>Alternates Present</u>
Chairperson:	V Hubbard		
NCI	J Milner		
NHLBI	D Danford		
NIDCR		R Nowjack-Rayner	
NIDDK		S Yanovski	
NINDS		P Turner	
NIAID		M Plaut	
NIGMS		S Somers	
NICHD	G Grave		
NEI		N Kurinij	
NIEHS		M McClure	
NIA	J Finkelstein		
NIAMS		J McGowan	
NIDCD	B Wong		
NIMH		P Muehrer	
NIDA		G Lin	
NIAAA		V Purohit	
NINR	K Helmers		
NCCAM		M Evans	
NCRR	F Taylor		
FIC		N Tomitch	
NCHGR		K Hudson	
<u>NIH Liaison Members:</u>			
OD/ODP		B Portnoy	
CC		N Sebring	
CIT		J Mahaffey	
CSR	S Kim		
OLPA			
NLM		S Phillips	
OC		M Stern	
ODS	P Coates		B Costello
PRCC		M Vogel-Taylor	
ORWH		G Hartmuller	
OBSSR	D Olster		
<u>Agency Liaison Representatives:</u>			
FDA	E Yetley		S Blakely
CDC/NCHS	J Wright		
CDC/NCCDPHP	S Kuester		D Galuska
HRSA		M Lawler	
ODPHP	K McMurry		
USDA	N Miller-Ihli		
DOD		K Friedl	
<u>DNRC:</u> SFrazier, WJohnson-Taylor, JKrebs-Smith, J Pennington, P Starke-Reed			
<u>Guests:</u> R Ballard-Barbash (NCI), J Dwyer (USDA), L Gansheroff (NIDDK), V Green (CNI), R Hines (NCI), A Jerkins (CSR), S Krebs-Smith (NCI), M Mathis (USDA), MF Picciano (ODS), S Pope (NIDDK), A Subar (NCI), C Swanson (ODS), R Troiano (NCI)			

**APPENDIX C. COVER LETTER FROM DR. WILLIAM S. STEIGER TO THE
WHO DIRECTOR-GENERAL REGARDING THE US COMMENTS ON THE
FAO/WHO REPORT**

July 2, 2002

The Honorable Gro Harlem Brundtland, M.D.
Director-General
World Health Organization
Avenue Appia 20
CH-1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

Dear Madam Director-General:

The United States Government is pleased the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) are examining the growing public health challenges of diet, physical activity and health for the prevention and control of chronic diseases, especially as the WHO moves to develop a larger global health strategy. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the April 26, 2002, draft report of the Joint WHO/FAO Expert Consultation on Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Diseases.

The United States shares your concern about the increase in chronic diseases throughout the world. Many developing countries are grappling with health problems caused by under-nutrition, chronic vitamin and mineral deficiencies, and preventable deaths, especially of mothers and children, who are the most vulnerable. At the same time, changing demographics are leaving many middle-income and wealthier countries with steadily older populations, and chronic diseases related to dietary excesses and imbalances are increasing in both developed and developing countries.

The United States supports a robust disease prevention and health promotion framework. As you know, Secretary Thompson has made preventive health and healthy behaviors a cornerstone of U.S. public health policy. This year, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will spend more than \$15.3 billion on prevention activities, including child immunization, health education, food safety, and disease prevention. President Bush's budget for fiscal year 2003 requests a \$950 million increase in prevention spending. Secretary Thompson remains committed to expanding the global dialogue on preventive health practices and the promotion of healthier lifestyles.

As you can see from the depth and breadth of our comments, the United States is most interested in the draft joint report from the WHO/FAO expert consultation. To maximize technical input to our response to the draft report, the United States initiated an interagency process, engaging scientific and policy experts from such agencies as the U.S. Departments of Commerce, Agriculture and State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and our own staff here at HHS. We hope our expert technical and scientific commentary will contribute in a meaningful way to the next draft of this report.

The WHO/FAO final report will serve as a critical resource for the development of the larger WHO global health strategy. Science should drive policy, and the WHO will no doubt agree on the critical importance of sound scientific consensus as a basis for developing international policies and for resolving possible differences of opinion.

In finalizing the report, the WHO and the FAO must adopt a comprehensive, evidence-based approach, in which qualified experts rigorously and objectively evaluate the science in a transparent manner and clearly articulate the basis for conclusions and recommendations, reflecting internal consistency and scientific rigor. Those recommendations should be based not only on the expert consultation, but also on the core competencies and expertise of both the WHO and the FAO.

The issues surrounding diet, nutrition, and the prevention of chronic diseases are extremely complex. We strongly encourage WHO and FAO to allow sufficient time for review and input from a range of stakeholders, including the scientific research community, industry, non-governmental organizations, and professional health societies. Specifically, we suggest that Member States and other stakeholders be given an additional opportunity for review and comment on the next draft report prior to final publication.

The WHO/FAO report identifies a number of areas in which mounting evidence indicates dietary and nutritional interventions hold promise for reducing the burden of chronic diseases that is escalating in the developing world. In this respect, the report highlights key areas for intervention strategies that require additional study to provide the quality of evidence needed before launching global food and nutrition policy recommendations of the magnitude presented.

At the same time, the WHO/FAO report makes it clear that it is premature to use available data to develop national food and nutrition policy without further evidence. The lack of clear links between the evidence provided either in the report or its accompanying annexes and the proposed recommendations delineated in Sections 5 and 6 of the report, are of particular concern.

Page 3 - Gro Harlem Brundtland, M.D.

We believe the active involvement of Member States early in this process can lead to a comprehensive, science-based strategy that all Member States and concerned agencies can support. We would encourage an open sharing of submitted comments with all who have been involved in the review process so that an improved document emerges. For any long-term, sustainable global strategy to succeed, it will be extremely important to engage a range of public and private stakeholders in the development, implementation, and review processes.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to review the draft report and provide comments, which we believe will strengthen subsequent versions. We look forward to the second draft of the report. We would also be pleased to answer any questions or provide you with additional clarification. You may reach me at 202/690-6174, and Mary Lou Valdez, Associate Director for Multilateral Affairs in the Office of Global Health Affairs, can also be an additional resource for you.

We look forward to continued collaboration with WHO and FAO in this important area.

Sincerely,

William R. Steiger, Ph.D.
Special Assistant to the Secretary for
International Affairs

Enclosure

Copy to: Jacques Diouf, Ph.D.
Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization